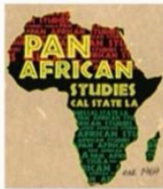


## #BlackoutCalStateLA Labor and Resource Refusal/Boycott Pan-African Studies' Demands



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### **#BlackoutCalStateLA Labor and Resource Refusal/Boycott Demands to Make Black Lives Matter and Build a #Freedom Campus at Cal State LA**

We, the undersigned, refuse to accept the continuation of anti-Blackness and the complete disregard for Black faculty decision-making and expertise at Cal State Los Angeles. There is a long documented pattern of anti-Blackness on campus that has created a hostile environment for Black students, faculty, staff, and community members. Many Black people and others at Cal State LA have lost confidence in the University leadership's professed commitment to racial justice, equity, and inclusion. The current national tragedies of institutional anti-Blackness and state-sanctioned violence are not isolated from this institution, even though administrators have done little to address their manifestation on campus.

Instead of the boldness shown by some universities who are owning up to the systemic biases at their institutions, we have experienced disregard, delay tactics, empty platitudes, and rhetoric. This University must not only reflect on its success, but also its failures. Touting the "success" of launching the second College of Ethnic Studies while denying Black faculty, staff, and students equal treatment, and the benefit of a welcoming campus is a travesty. We will no longer allow the selling of this false narrative.

During this #BlackLivesMatter *movement-moment* of national uprisings against racial injustice and state-sanctioned violence, we call upon Cal State LA to take immediate, concrete steps to eradicate all expressions of anti-Blackness on campus. Administrators must end the practices that have allowed institutionalized racism to flourish—overtly and covertly—in the day-to-day operations of the University. There are several recent examples of anti-Blackness on campus that we will highlight here:

1. Over the past decade, there has been a steep decline in the percentage of Black students admitted into Cal State LA, with no coherent plan of action by administrators to address the problem. Currently, the Black student population has dropped to roughly 3%, which is three times less than the percentage of Black students in LAUSD. While **Ujima** had been the only campus-wide program focused on recruiting Black students to Cal State LA, administrators abruptly discontinued it in 2018 without providing any clear rationale for their decision. Black students who are admitted and enroll in the University often complain that outside of PAS they feel a deep sense of isolation and experience microaggressions in classrooms where they are usually one of only a few Black students in attendance.

2. On July 21, 2020, an open letter with two dozen Black faculty and staff signatories was sent to President William Covino and new Provost Jose Luis Alvarado urging them to divest from campus policing and invest those resources in Black students and Black study. Over 300 additional faculty, staff, students, and community supporters co-signed the open letter, which requested an **administrative response by July 31, 2020**. To date, they have yet to even acknowledge receipt of the letter, let alone address any of its content. We are disappointed that administrators have attempted to appropriate language such as “reimagining public safety” and “community justice and care” from Dr. Melina Abdullah and other Black Lives Matter organizers, but they are ignoring the presence and validity of these demands. While we have incorporated them as part of the larger set of #FreedomCampus demands below, it is yet another example of campus administrators completely ignoring the concerns of Black faculty, staff, and students.
3. The search process for an inaugural dean of the College of Ethnic Studies has been rife with anti-Blackness, administrative interference, and a complete disregard for Ethnic Studies faculty expertise. First of all, President Covino and former Provost Jose Gomez should have automatically appointed Dr. Melina Abdullah as the Inaugural Dean of CoES due to her extensive record of fighting for the expansion of Ethnic Studies in K-12 and higher education. Instead, they made sure she was not even considered one of the three final candidates, and then they blocked the only other finalist for Dean that PAS faculty, students, and staff found initially acceptable. Concerned PAS faculty members emailed President Covino seeking an explanation for what had transpired, but in a tersely written one-sentence response he refused to provide any clarification. Students, faculty, and community members subsequently formed the #FreedomCampus coalition demanding administrators appoint Dr. Abdullah as the Inaugural Dean. However, one administrator informed Dr. Abdullah in no uncertain terms that she would never be Dean at Cal State LA due to her unapologetic opposition to all expressions of anti-Blackness on campus and in the community. Although members of the coalition have made several attempts to meet with President Covino and current Provost Alvarado, administrators continue to reject any direct communication. On August 5, 2020, without any pretense to faculty or student shared governance, Provost Alvarado announced the appointment of an interim dean who has no ties to Ethnic Studies or any leadership experience in academia for that matter. This entire experience has been an insult to Black faculty, students, staff, and community members, and it ultimately undermines the authenticity and permanence of the College of Ethnic Studies at Cal State LA.

Therefore, in solidarity with the Black Student Union, Black Faculty and Staff Caucus, Black Lives Matter - Los Angeles, California Faculty Association, the Department of Pan-African Studies, the Latin American Studies Association, LatinxFaculty4BLM, and El Movimiento de Estudiantil Chicanx de Aztlan, the students, faculty, staff, and community of Cal State LA recognize the urgency of this movement-moment and call on President Covino and campus administration to make Black Lives Matter and build a Freedom Campus by meeting the following demands:



**CoES Leadership:**

1. Appoint Dr. Melina Abdullah as the Inaugural Dean of the College based on the collective demand of students, faculty, staff, and community. We believe she is the only person capable of leaning into the role of Dean on day one to help stabilize the fledgling, new College of Ethnic Studies. Melina has the humility, integrity, and visionary insight necessary to navigate the CoES during the global COVID-19 pandemic, budgetary crisis, and nationwide uprising against police violence. The College urgently requires a leader who will be responsive to the needs of students, faculty, staff, and the community, and who will contest the entrenched manifestations of academic neoliberalism and anti-Blackness so prevalent at Cal State LA.

**Defund the Police and Reimagine Campus Safety:**

*Meet the demands of the Black Faculty and Staff Caucus:*

2. Disarm and divest from Cal State LA campus police and replace it with non-punitive forms of accountability, including restorative and transformative justice, trauma-informed crisis teams, and other community-led public health and safety programs.
3. Redirect the resources from policing toward racial and gender justice teaching, research, anti-racism training for campus employees, and community initiatives, as well as increased material support to hire more Black mental health counselors, faculty (this includes resources for increased hiring and retention), staff, and students workers on campus. More specifically, some of those resources should be allocated to the creation of a Center for Black Student Success and to provide scholarships for Black students who balance outstanding academic records and commitments to addressing current social issues. A committee of faculty experts in Pan-African Studies and other departments, as well as Black students, staff, and workers, will develop the plan for the redirection of both immediate and ongoing resources.
4. End all contracts between Cal State LA and local, county, and state police, federal police departments, and security agencies, including but not limited to LAPD, the LA Sheriff's Department, the California Highway Patrol, the Alhambra Police Department, the Department of Homeland Security, and ICE. As part of this demand, we want a public accounting of all existing contracts, memoranda of understanding, and other agreements with such agencies.

**Student Admissions and Empowerment:**

5. Make Cal State LA an open admissions campus, beginning with the removal of "impacted" campus status.
6. Declare a "state of emergency" for Black students that funds and enables the Department of Pan-African Studies to outreach to and directly admit a minimum of at least 500 students per year.
7. Fully support and fund the Halisi House, with autonomy over residential requirements and programming in coordination with the Department of Pan-African Studies.
8. Expand the number of counselors to the amount required for on-demand student counseling services, placing all counselors on the tenure track, and prioritizing the hiring of Black counselors and counselors of color.

9. Give students the power to vote on and veto the hiring of campus administrators and establish a student-driven process for the removal of administrators.

**Ethnic Studies:**

10. Give the College of Ethnic Studies autonomy over its undergraduate and graduate student admissions process, with unlimited admissions.
11. Provide each Department within the College of Ethnic Studies a minimum of twelve tenure-line faculty.
12. Impose no restrictions on the number of courses offered by the College of Ethnic Studies and fully fund faculty to cover classes.
13. Defer on all Ethnic Studies requirements and courses to the College of Ethnic Studies.
14. Support AB 1460 to make Ethnic Studies a CSU graduation requirement and withdraw support for the Chancellor's proposal to undermine Ethnic Studies by watering down its definition.
15. Guarantee and support a maximum of 3-3 teaching load for research-active and community-engaged tenure-line faculty and 4-4 for lecturer faculty.

**Black Labor & Resource Refusal (#BlackoutCalStateLA):**

Until these demands are met, Black faculty in the Department of Pan African Studies, Black colleagues in other departments, and our allies across campus will **refuse to**:

- Participate in any new search for a permanent Dean of the College of Ethnic Studies during AY 2020-2021.
- Participate in any committees or other activities of the CoES.
- Participate in any University committee whose stated objective is related to Diversity and Inclusion.
- Allow Cal State LA to use our accomplishments to promote the University; these "celebrations" of individual recognition provide camouflage for a long-standing practice, if not policy, of neglect and disregard for Black people who teach and research on race. We will not cooperate with the University's Office of Communications and Public Affairs, nor be highlighted on the University's web-page.

Without movement on our demands, we will also encourage colleagues elsewhere to boycott applying for the position of CoES Dean, and to decline any invitations to participate in talks, conferences, or symposia hosted by Cal State LA until the University takes meaningful steps to address its structural anti-Blackness. We request that those committing to this action sign this letter in solidarity.